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LEAD Original Programming

"Latina College Administrators: Triumphs and Challenges ... Leaving a Legacy" (2018)

START – 00:00:00

[Sound Effect]

[Music]

[Foreign Language]

>> And welcome to the next installment of Lead Media programming from Studio 54 campus of California State University San Bernardino. The digital media platform for inspired educators, leaders, and community activists and advocates taking our message directly to the people, [foreign language]. Thank you for sharing our common interest in the analysis, discussion, critique, dissemination, and commitment to the educational issues that impact Latinos. I'm your host, Dr. Enrique Murillo, Jr. And this episode is a syndicated replay from season nine of LEAD Summit 2018. The theme that year was Viva La Mujer. And the strands and design of the summit that year were all planned and led by the Mujeres of LEAD. At the time Latino girls and women made up one in five females in The United States. And it was predicted that by 2060 are to form nearly one-third of the total female population. As a fast-growing and influential constituency, Latinos have made significant strides and progress in a number of areas. Yet progress has been extremely slow and there is a long way to go to fully close gender, class, educational, and racial-ethnic disparities. This panel's entitled Latina College Administrators: Triumphs and Challenges, Leaving a Legacy. And addresses first the very few Latino representations overall within executive leadership positions in higher education. But more so the dismal representation of Latina women executives in either community colleges or four-year universities specifically. Continue and enjoy the full value and complexity of this episode. We extend our appreciation to all our LEAD sponsors and partners, planners, volunteers, speakers, and panelists, production team, affiliates, and town hall chapters. We commend them all for lifting their voice and uplifting the plight of Latinos in education. Thank you. Gracias [foreign language]. Thank you. Thank you once again, [foreign language]. Okay. Now it's my great pleasure to turn it over to Diana. Dian Z. Rodriguez is the president [foreign language] where she's at. The president of San Bernardino Valley College. Diana previously served as the vice president of student services at Las Positas College in the Chabot-Las Positas community college district. She has nearly - how many years? Let's not say. But a lot of years of higher education experience. Prior to joining the Las Positas team, she was VP of student services at Palo Verde College. Oh, that was mentioned a little while ago. Right. Over there by Bly [phonetic].

[Foreign Language]

>> Right. She has served as a tenured faculty member at San Bernardino Valley College within the counseling department and taught courses in student development and human development. While at Palo Verde College she taught courses in organizational leadership and marketing. And Ms. Rodriguez has earned an associate's degree from Palo Verde College in liberal arts. A bachelor's degree in marketing, a master's degree in business administration, and also a master's degree here in education from CSU San Bernardino. Okay. All yours. President.

[Applause]

>> Thank you, Dr. Murillo. I appreciate that warm introduction. Before we begin, I'd like to start out by just kind of reviewing the session today for all of the folks who may not have a pamphlet or a booklet. So, I'll read, I'll read quickly the description for our panel. It's entitled Latina College Administrators: Triumphs and Challenges While Leaving a Legacy. In the United States, not only the overall growth within the Latino population but especially increased student attendance and presence on campuses of higher education, has led to an increased prevalence of social inequities for our students. There is very few Latino representation overall within the leadership positions at our colleges and universities. And more so the representation of Latina women executives either at community colleges or four-year institutions is dismal. Of those Latina executives, most serve at the community colleges versus the four-year universities. Those Latinas whoever have served in executive positions have attained a wealth of knowledge through their experiences in leading complex institutions. It is extremely important that we learn how Latinas describe their experiences and challenges while providing hope to the students they serve and within their communities. So, with that I would like to introduce the talented Latina leadership that we have within some of our four-year schools and our community colleges. As Dr. Murillo said, my name is Diana Rodriguez. And I am the 14th president of San Bernardino Valley College. I am the first Latina president in the colleges' 91 year history.

[Applause]

>> And with that I am extremely grateful to our board of trustees and our Chancellor Mr. Bruce Barron for providing me the opportunity to lead one of the most historic colleges in our state which happens to be in my community. Thank you. On the program Dr. Rita Cepeda was scheduled to be here. Dr. Cepeda was the chancellor - retired chancellor from the San Jose Evergreen Community College. And with the long rich, rich history of advocacy for Latinos. But unfortunately, due to some unexpected circumstances, she wasn't able to join us. But we appreciate her contributions to our presentation. With us we also have Oliva Rosas. Olivia is the first Latina associate vice president in Cal State San Bernardino's 50-year history.

[Applause]

>> Just a couple of things about Olivia. She has worked in education for over 30 years. And was appointed as the associate vice president for student success and educational equity in 2010. Under her leadership Cal State witnessed record enrollments, substantial increases in financial aid and scholarship awards, and the establishment of the office of pre-collegiate programs and undocumented student success center. Just to name a few of her successes. Over the years she's been honored with many, many, many awards including employee of the year for here at Cal State San Bernardino. The Pica [phonetic] appreciation award. The Pioneer Valley award for her work with the African American community. And most recently the LEAD Summit Medallion for her services. Thank you, Olivia, for being here.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Next, we have Nohemy Ornelas. Nohemy was the first Latina associate superintendent vice president of student services at Allan Hancock College and the institution has been with us for 98 years. She was appointed as Allan Hancock College's associate superintendent vice president for student services in 2014. Her leadership roles have included dean of student services and director of financial aid. In 2016 she was one of only seven people selected to receive the honored Alumni award. The highest honor award by the Alumni Association of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. She also received a Latino Legacy award for making a difference in the Santa Maria community and was named Pacific Coast Business Times 40 under 40 class of 2016 recognized in part of a few - excuse me. Recognized part of a new generation of dynamic leaders throughout the San Luis Obispo Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties. Thank you Nohemy for being here.

[Applause]

>> Also, we have Dr. Cynthia Olivo.

>> Whoa. << Woo hoo.

>> Cynthia's got some fans in the room. Cynthia was the first Latina vice president at Pasadena City College. An institution with 92 years of history. What an accomplishment.

[Applause]

>> Dr. Olivo has been a professional in higher education since 1995. For 23 years she has served in the capacities - leadership capacities including a dean, associate vice president, and vice president. This is her 16th year as an administrator including seven years at the university level. And nine years with her community colleges. Her leadership qualities include the ability to lead innovation and improve student success.

Consensus building among stakeholder groups to advance student success while creating and engaging inclusive environment to foster change in our practices with an emphasis on implementing cultural competence. Her initiatives include collaborating to create at scaled-up pathway programs. Pasadena's complete graduation initiatives. Student equity leadership to transform colleges and - college practices in the classroom, hiring, and within student services programs. All of these efforts and many, many more have resulted in a - in contributing toward Pasadena earning the distinction of one of the top ten community colleges in the nation by the Aspen Prize for community college excellence. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> In order to frame our discussion, I realize that that was a rather lengthy introduction to our presentation. However, I wanted to highlight the accomplishments and the successes of Latinas in our community. Because I think that is something that we don't hear enough about. As one of our Puente students says, how do you celebrate those successes? One of those ways in which to celebrate the success is to speak it. And not let it just rest on a plaque somewhere. Or in our, in our history books and so on. But to speak it so that others hear it and acknowledge our accomplishments and celebrate it. So, with that we have some - we've designed some questions that, that all of us will respond to kind of talk about what we have experienced, what we believe are our responsibilities, and what we hope to leave as a legacy as we move through our careers. So, our first question that we'll address is what do you believe are the current challenges and the biggest challenges for the next generation of Latina leaders? You know if Rita were here, Dr. Cepeda, she would probably say crisis leadership. Right. And by that, that goes beyond managing the communications or highlighting a notion that the best - you know highlight the notion on how to deal with crisis. But it's really about building a foundation of trust. It's about organizing and meeting with your communities and the folks that you work with. And to build that strong foundation that is going to help organizations get through difficult times. And leveraging these crisis situations. Right. And what it means and what we can do to change institutions for the better. And at the core of this crisis, leadership I would say would be communication with all of the stakeholders and all of your constituent groups including students. One of our most precious constituent groups. Clarity of your vision and values of the institution. And caring relationships. Now, I thought about if I should include that or not, right. Because you don't hear most men talk about caring relationships. Right. But as women, us Latinos know how valuable those relationships can be. And those who pay attention to those relationships whether it be under crisis or in our everyday work and in our everyday challenges. It's difficult to do that. Because there's a lot of noise coming at us. A lot of things as leaders that we have to respond to on a daily basis. But if we can do that, if we can get past the noise, then it makes it that much easier to move beyond and break free of the norms of our history. And allow us to solve the problems that were created in our past. Crisis leadership. So, Nohemy would you like to respond as well?

>> First of all, I'd like to thank everyone for being here. This is such a great honor to be up here. And I'm surrounded by wonderful leaders and very inspired after today. I think

one of our responsibilities is to ensure that everyone has access to create an environment where we are able to reach our educational goals. And there's a couple of things that can be done through that. The first one is looking at institutional policies and identifying the barriers. Oftentimes we talk about the policies that have been in place in existence for a very long time. And they're very difficult to change. And I think that's why I'm up here today as an advocate and as a leader is because I saw the inequities in the policies. And it's really our role to be an advocate to create those changes so that we can foster a positive learning environment for everyone. The second thing that I think is really important is to create opportunities for students. We have to be able to create the opportunities for children and students to grow in themselves. If we do not create that, it's difficult for us to have the leadership and the advocacy that we need. And oftentimes we do a lot at the high schools. And I want to advocate that we do more at the elementary schools. I really think that we need to begin younger. It's not, it's not effective just working with the high schools. We need to inspire students at a younger age. And that's the third, the third thing that goes into building confidence. Oftentimes I see a lot of students and we do not have the confidence to make the change or to make decisions to move on and advocate. By starting at an earlier age, we can begin to instill that confidence in every child and every student that there is open doors to education and that education does change opportunities. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Cynthia, [inaudible]?

>> Sure. Yes. I believe that one of the most important issues that we as leaders can undertake is to keep our eye on student success completion rates. Especially for our students who are coming from historically marginalized communities. And if somebody is keeping their eye on that data, then that person is also helping us as practitioners to change what we do. I believe that you know our students are college-ready. We do not need to create a college-going culture. They're ready for college. And as a Latina leader what I help do is to do what a new book that's just out on the market a couple of years. It says to help us become student-ready colleges. Right. And that requires all of us to reflect upon our practices. And to increase the sense of belonging that students feel on college campuses. And so, I believe that as a Latina leader it's my opportunity to create consensus amongst us as practitioners. But agreeing that we are going to take the responsibility to change our practices so that we meet students where they are, and we help them succeed. And at Cal - I'm an alumni of Cal State San Bernardino. So, I think I slipped back into my role that I used to work here and present on this stage. But at Pasadena City College what we've been working on over the past few years has increased our Latino student success. You know from 36.8% completion rate to 43.7% completion rate for Latino students specifically. And out of 30,000 students, 51% of our students are Latino. So, as a Latina leader it - I do take it as my responsibility to ensure that we're not just Hispanic serving institution by number but we're a Hispanic serving institution in action. And so, that's what I believe are you know the things that we should be focusing upon.

[Applause]

>> Olivia, would you like to respond?

>> Just a couple of things. I think just to echo what both Nohemy and Cynthia have said is that you know being a leader is tough. But along with the risks that we take we really need to see that through a lens of also an opportunity. Because nothing that is worth fighting for - you've heard this. Is going to be easy. So, but the foundation for that at least for me is that you have to build relationships. Because the more buy-in you get and the more that you get support to change policy and to change the systemic ways that sometimes we operate under, you're going to - you can't be alone. You cannot do it by yourself. So, building relationships and building alliances is what's going to make us you know make progress. To help us to make progress. Along the lines of what Cynthia mentioned in terms of you know our students, absolutely. Our students are ready. They want to go to college. They want the opportunity to succeed. They - and we - our job our responsibility is to have that - give them access. But not only provide them with access so they can get here, is it what are the institutions doing internally in the classroom through extracurricular you know type of activities, what are we doing as institutions to be ready for the students that we are bringing into our different you know campuses? So, it's learning to navigate and to advocate for our students. But also gaining the support from other key players you know at our campuses to be able to succeed.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

>> You know our last speaker talked about sexual harassment in the workplace in the field and so on. What can we do to eliminate sexual harassment and gender disparities in leadership roles? You know we've all heard the adage see something say something, right. But a lot of times we take a step back because we're intimidated, or we fear how that might reflect on us. Or will we be causing more problems for the person that we see as the victim? You know what is our role in that? And in terms of leadership roles, we need more Latinas within the education administration. I am currently one of six, maybe five. I understand one just retired. One of five or six Latina presidents in the California Community College system. A system with 114 colleges in 76 districts. Very, very low percentage for Latinas in leadership. You know I would say that we need to encourage as Olivia stated to take risks. Oftentimes Latinas are risk-averse. We're not raised to take risk. I would challenge everyone in this room to step out. Step out and step up and take on a role stretch a little bit and then stretch a little more to take on some leadership roles. And also, be a mentor. I know I'm still in contact, very much in contact with one of my mentors as I moved into administration, Ms. Judith Viaze [phonetic]. And while I was here, I was also an alum and worked here at Cal State San Bernardino. I was taken under the wing of the late Dr. Rosa Gonzales who was - who I always considered one of my mentors as well. So, I would also challenge you to be a mentor to someone who you see who has potential. Or maybe just needs the encouragement. So, ladies, in your

opinion what can we do to eliminate sexual harassment and gender disparities in leadership roles? Cynthia.

>> Thank you, Diana. I believe it's really important for us to create a climate where people feel safe to come forward and to share their experiences regarding sexual harassment. So, in that - in saying that I believe it's best to create networks on your campus so that people can share with you informally about what they're experiencing. And then familiarize yourself with the policies and procedures of formal reporting of sexual harassment. Now in my 20s, I am somebody who did experience sexual harassment. And I reported it to the Fair Employment Equal Housing officer in San Bernardino. And the process was very clear. And within three months my case was resolved. And so, I can share with you that although it may be unfamiliar territory to speak up and to report this formally, it does help. In my situation, I asked for all of the employees of this particular business here in town to mandate sexual harassment training for everyone who worked there. I also asked that all pictures that displayed women in scantily clad clothing to be removed. And you know I also I think I requested for compensation during the time that I wasn't able to work while the investigation was occurring. And so, I share that to encourage those of you if you ever experience it, do not be afraid to report. It can be resolved both formally and informally. And so, create that network then you can gain strength from one another and report.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Olivia.

>> And you know I know that we're, we're afraid sometimes like Cynthia mentioned and Diana too, to say something. But as you can see Cynthia says something, she's vice president of students. You know at Pasadena City College. And that's because we have to have that courage you know. But again, we can't do that in isolation. I think seeking support is first and foremost. And feel you know comfortable going to someone and sharing you know your situation. And second, speak out. I think once you know you're able to get through the trauma and feel comfortable with whoever you have divulged or confided in, in the situation, people would help you. There is, there is assistance. And I think we just need to be there for each other. For other women you know who experience that kind of situations.

>> Thank you. Nohemy.

[Applause]

>> Well, I think sexual harassment is everywhere. And victims can be as young as a newborn to an adult. And so, I think that the best way to address these issues are talking about them. So, through education and being open to have conversations. Oftentimes we steer away from the difficult conversations because we don't want to talk

about them. But having open conversations and being open to share freely in a safe space is really, really important. Colleges have strengthened their initiatives to create awareness. And create support for students. So, I think stronger mental health services and collaborations with our communities, our community agencies is very, very important and instrumental to ensure that students or victims are getting the support that they need.

>> Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Switching topics, a bit. I want to talk a bit about our responsibility in regard to the DACA legislation. What do we see as most important for our students and our communities? I know that at San Bernardino Valley College the most important thing that we do is to let students know that we stand with them. And that we support them. San Bernardino was at our campus had the very first dreamer center in the state. And one of the things that we pride ourselves on is that we have a great number of individuals from our community really resources from our communities from activists to attorneys that come in and talk with our students and their families about their rights. And what they can do to protect themselves. Because you know our students are scared. And rightfully so. And I think it is our responsibility to show that we do care. Not only just in words but in our actions. And one of the things that I'm very proud of that our board of trustees and our chancellor did, almost right away, sent out a letter of really a diversity statement that talks about how we honor at both of our institutions San Bernardino Valley College and Crafton Hills College, about how we honor diversity. And that we will work with all of our students to ensure their safety as well as their family's safety. Because it is important. Cynthia, would you like to respond first?

>> Yes. So, it was here at Cal State San Bernardino when I was an undergraduate that I organized a group called the Chicano Coalition. And it was one of, one of the first issues that we were able to address. And that was when we did not have assembly bill 540. We did not have DACA. And so, I believe organizing groups on your campuses for students to join is extremely important. That way our students feel peer-to-peer support. And then working in collaboration with the administration. And that's where it's key the Latinos and Latinas are represented in the administration. Because oftentimes our students do not feel safe coming forward to share their status. However, if they can identify somebody that they connect with, then they're more inclined to share and we can offer the help and support. At Pasadena City College, for the past five years now, we've held a program that we designed called The Safe Zone Coalition. And we've provided professional development for over 500 faculty, staff, and administrators who are now allies for undocumented students. And I'm very proud to also share that this summer we will open our safe zone center. And so, it's a very strong movement on our campus. And we do have around 1,000 undocumented students. And in order to help our students feel safer, if they do not feel comfortable during this national political climate, we also have a very vibrant and active social media campaign. So, that our students have all of the information about free resources available in the San Gabriel

and Los Angeles Valley. It's really helpful to do that. I monitor how many views we have whenever we post a flyer or information about free DACA renewal workshops et cetera. And then we also host that on our campus. So, I think it's extremely important that we make sure our institutions are providing the opportunities to show our students our undocumented students specifically, that we support them. To all of our dreamers out there I'd like to say that you know years, and years, and years ago I remember when I was a recruiter for Cal State San Bernardino a student told me you know I want to go to college like you're saying that I should.

[Foreign Language]

>> And I remember that student. I said you know we'll do our part. We're going to fight so that we change the laws. You do your part. Go to college. And we'll take care of the rest. And I'm so proud that since that time we have assembly bill 540. We have a number of laws in place so that we are helping our undocumented students now at the state and federal level. And that's something that I always remind everyone about who's employed at a college or a university. You might have your own personal opinion about these topics. But as educators, we must all follow the law. And it's good to remind people about that.

[Applause]

>> In the interest of time, I'm going to move on to our next question. Enrique giving me the look back here. Yeah. So, but I did want to ask each of the panelists, and I'll divulge myself, what would we like our legacy to be? Because I think that's important on how we operate and how we go about our careers. I know that I would like my legacy to be that she educated the alien empire. She made a difference in our community. Because I think our work starts here for me. It starts in our own communities and there's so much work to be done. In maybe one or two sentences, Olivia, what would you say your legacy?

>> I'm going to take 30 seconds to address the question before this. Because I would be remiss if I didn't.

>> She's a leader. But she can't follow directions.

>> If I.

>> Strong leadership.

>> If I - I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the efforts of the staff here at Cal State University San Bernardino who really work very hard to establish the undocumented student center on our campus. We serve over 800 students. And it took exactly what Cynthia said, talking with people, letting students know that we were here to support them. The administration has supported. And our staff and the students have supported every initiative, all the efforts. Our faculty signed a resolution. President's office gave us

money to open the center, to have operating expenses for the center, to secure a position. And we are just doing great things. So, I really had, had to share that.

[Applause]

>> And I think to now address the question I was supposed to address. It's - I think for me, I would like to be remembered or leave a legacy that I put people first. Because I know people put me first before I got to where I'm at. That I open doors and I advocated for students. Also, that I was tough but fair. But most importantly I think also that I earned people's respect through my actions. And that I was a trustworthy individual.

>> I can vouch for the fact that Olivia was tough but fair. She was my first boss when I was an administrator.

[Applause]

>> Nohemy.

>> A lot of community colleges have developed promise programs which are a way for students to get their first year free at a community college. And I think in terms of legacy we talk about creating a college-going culture or already having a college-going culture. I think for me I'd really like students to stay in college and be able to complete their educational goal. Oftentimes we see students and financial aid and finances are a huge barrier to our students being able to continue on. And as a financial aid advocate, I hope to really create policies and procedures and practices that will improve our outcomes for students.

>> And.

>> Cynthia.

>> My legacy I would like for it to include the fact that I put students at the center of our work. And I create a sense of familia amongst all of us educators and community members while creating the conditions for change so that we can improve our services, our programs, and our learning experiences for our students. So, that they can achieve their dreams.

[Applause]

>> What is your legacy, president?

>> My legacy, my legacy as I stated before is that I truly would like to be known for having helped to educate the alien empire. And I'm passionate about that. I say it at all of our opening days at our campus. And I am so committed to it that I get criticized for this. But it's about building relationships and being a mentor and doing all those things. That for every student that I speak with and for every student group that I meet every

semester that comes onto our campus, in any setting, I provide them my personal cell phone number. Because I don't want any student regardless of age to feel that they don't have someone that they can't connect with to speak with about going to school. So, no excuses with me. Call me. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> Do a question?

>> No, that's [inaudible]. We ran out of time.

>> Okay. Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> Thank you.

>> All right. Let's give it up.

[Applause]

38:48

>> Okay. We can do, we can do one question if you promise it will be like super quick. Do you have a - does [foreign language] have a question?

>> Yes.

>> Yes. 38:57

[Background Noise]

39:02

>> I really want your cell number.

>> Hello. My name is Luis Valasco Monenda [phonetic.]. I am a student from the Riverside Community College District. And part of the Puente Project.

>> Yay.

>> Long story short. Puente works.

>> Yes.

>> It's improving.

>> Yes.

>> Without Puente I believe that myself and many more would have trickled out of our college education. My question to you is how can you as Latina in leadership specifically college administrators join us to fine the consistent support that Puente has been fighting for, for the past 35 plus years? And how can you help to have Puente institutionalize and support its growth? And not just Puente but many other programs as well.

>> Do any of you?

[Applause]

>> One of the things that I would, that I would suggest or recommend, is that if you're looking for support not only at the - well, what I would recommend is to look for support not only on your college campuses. Right. But also, within your community. When your Latina president asks you to join her at - in Sacramento to talk about student issues, please join me when you come. If you're not invited to participate, invite yourself. Step up. Step up. I know that I would appreciate it. I think I can speak for my colleagues when they say that. And Cynthia reminded me that I didn't give you my cell phone number.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible]

[Laughter]

>> True, true to my word. 909-800-6252. Larissa [phonetic] has it on the speed dial. She'll get it to you.

[Laughter]

>> Nine 09-800-6252. No excuses for not going to school. Thank you.

[Applause]

>> One question from the social media.

>> Yeah. Okay. A question from social media.

>> Yes. The question comes from Marcella [phonetic] Ramirez who's at Cal State University Long Beach. Asks, in the spirit of Gloria Anzaldua what is your responsibility in combating these heteronormativity's, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia within the ChicanX LatinX community and our movements in admissions, policies, procedures,

and student services? What are you doing to combat master narratives about the ChicanX, LatinX community that do not include the stories of queer and trans-ChicanX, LatinX leaders?

>> Cynthia?

>> Yeah. SO, I can answer that. You know our safe zone coalition that I mentioned at Pasadena City College its two-fold. We help students come out of the shadows. And that's two populations. Undocumented students is one. And our LGBTQ students is the other. And so, our allies go through an eight-hour training. The first four hours is about undocumented students. And the next four hours are about our LGBTQ students. And our safe zone center will be for both populations. And I do believe it's extremely important as leaders that we ensure we're creating inclusive environments for all. And a sense of belonging is extremely important. And so, every cue possible that we can send to our students to tell them that we care about them and we want them to succeed, is extremely impotent. So, I wanted to share. Those are a couple of things that we've done at Pasadena City College.

[Applause]

[Foreign Language]

END – 00:44:11